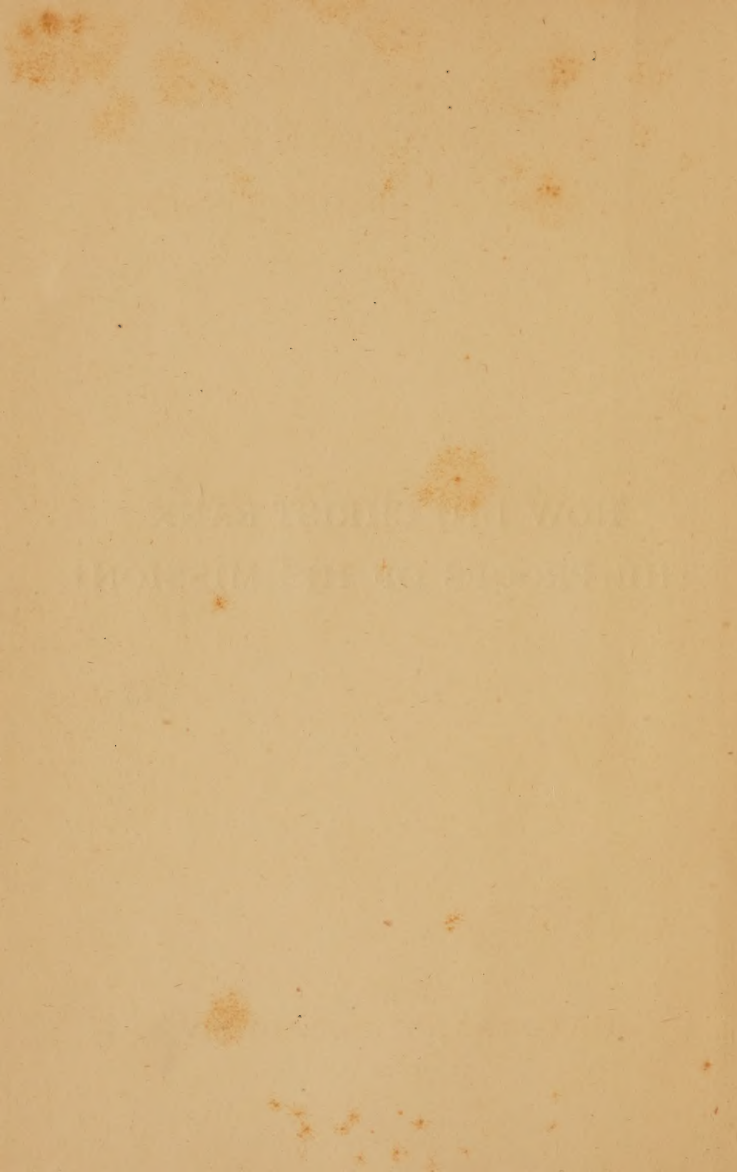

HOW DID CHRIST
RANK THE PROOFS
OF HIS MISSION?

LIBRARY
Theological Seminary,

BT 304 .R46 1872

How did Christ rank the
proofs of his mission?

HOW DID CHRIST RANK
THE PROOFS OF HIS MISSION?



HOW DID CHRIST RANK
THE PROOFS OF HIS MISSION?

BY
GEORGE RENAUD, M.A.
LATE FELLOW OF C. C. C. OXFORD.

LONDON:
HATCHARDS, PICCADILLY.
1872.

LONDON:

PRINTED BY JOHN STRANGEWAYS,
Castle St. Leicester Sq.

PREFACE.

THIS does not profess to be a book of evidences. It contains a few thoughts about evidences pursued only in the one line indicated, viz., that which follows the teaching of Christ Himself; and consists chiefly of materials from which the reader may form his own judgment of that teaching. I have taken up this subject because, as far as I am aware, no one else has done so; and because it seems to deserve a separate, and indeed far more able, treatment. The Christian should not neglect anything that is likely to make him more ready in giving a reason of the hope that is in him; and the sceptic will admit that it is reasonable to hear what the

Founder of Religion says upon the point. I therefore venture to send forth the book with the earnest prayer to the God of truth that He may be pleased to grant it some share, however humble, in promoting the glory of the Name that is, to the Christian, above every name.

ERRATA.

Page 2, line 2, *insert* 'two' before 'centuries.

„ 17, line 2, *for* 'nor' *read* 'not.'

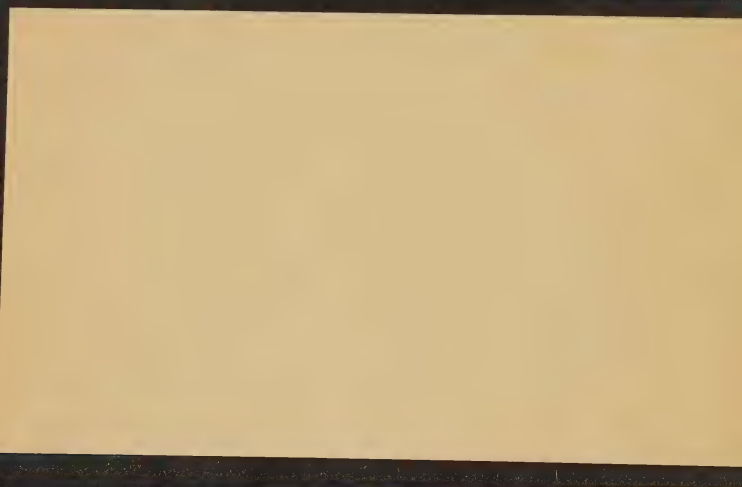
„ 48, line 14, *for* 'αὐτῶν' *read* 'αὐτὸν.'

„ 62, note 2, line 3, *for* 'circumstance' *read* 'circumstances.'

„ 64, last paragraph, line 1, *read* 'indeed.'

„ 71, line 15, *delete* comma.

„ 83, line 8, *delete* comma.



CONTENTS.

CHAP.	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTORY	I
II. COLLECTION OF PASSAGES—	
§ 1. Christ and Nathanael	13
§ 2. The Sign which Christ gave of His Mission	17
§ 3. Nicodemus a Representative Man	20
§ 4. The Capernaite Nobleman	22
§ 5. Christ and the Leper	24
§ 6. Christ and the Gadarene Demoniac	25
§ 7. Christ and the Scribes at the Healing of the Paralytic	26
§ 8. Christ at Jerusalem at the Second Pass- over	27
§ 9. Christ's Answer to the Baptist's Disciples	29
§ 10. Chorazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum : Tyre, Sidon, Sodom	33
§ 11. Self-imposed Restraint on Miracles	36
§ 12. The Bread of Life	38
§ 13. A Sign from Heaven refused	40
§ 14. Peter's Confession of Christ	42

CHAP.

PAGE

II. COLLECTION OF PASSAGES (*continued*)—

§ 15. Christ's Challenge to the Pharisees	45
§ 16. Christ at the Feast of Dedication	48
§ 17. The Raising of Lazarus	51
§ 18 <i>a</i> . Christ's Last Discourse with His Disciples	52
§ 18 <i>b</i> . The same	57
§ 19. Christ's Prayer	58
§ 20. Christ's Declaration to Pilate	60
§ 21. The Unbelief and Conviction of Thomas	61

III. INFERENCES 65

IV. SUPERSTRUCTURE 83

V. HONEST DOUBT 90

HOW DID CHRIST RANK THE PROOFS OF HIS MISSION?

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

‘A CHANGE,’ says Dr. Young,* ‘in the form of the argument for the proper Deity of Jesus Christ seems to be demanded in our day. Accepted and familiar proofs may not have lost their strength, but they have lost their freshness, and they are wanting in adaptation to the peculiar intellectual culture and structure of the present age.’

‘There is no one, I think,’ says Archbishop Trench,† ‘who would now be satisfied with the

* *Christ of History*, introduction.

† *Notes on the Miracles*, pp. 86, 87.

general tone and spirit in which the defences of the faith, written during the last centuries, and beginning with the memorable work of Grotius, are composed Men would know no other statement of the case than this barren and hungry one :—Christianity is a divine revelation, and this the miracles which accompanied its promulgation prove.’

On the other hand, Dr. Heurtley contends, ‘ We cannot as reasonable men, we dare not as Christian men, make light of the argument from miracles, or even give it a subordinate place among the Christian evidences. It may have been dwelt upon too exclusively, and have been pushed into undue prominence in some instances ; but that is only a reason why we should be especially on our guard, lest, by a change of fortune naturally enough to be expected, it should be thrown into the background and unduly depressed in others ;’ and he adds concerning Coleridge, what may surely apply to others also, ‘ I think that he has in this respect, through dread of one extreme, contributed “to thrust the pendulum back with too violent a swing” towards the opposite.’*

To the same effect Bishop Fitzgerald: ‘ It cannot be denied that for many years back there has been a general distaste for that *apologetic* reli-

* *Replies to ‘Essays and Reviews,’* pp. 194, 195.

gious literature which was popular in the last century. This has doubtless been greatly owing to a reaction from the disproportionate attention paid to such literature by the divines of a former age, and has taken place in virtue of that general rule which seems to ordain that an over value of any branch of knowledge in one generation shall be attended by an unjust depreciation of it in the next. But,' he says, 'a prudent man will treat the truths of Religion as matters of fact, and seek for the appropriate evidence of matters of fact—that is, in other words, for historical evidence.' Nor need this search be barren of spiritual results. 'The careful and candid investigation of the evidences on which Christianity rests—not for the satisfying a mere inquisitive curiosity, but to find truth for the regulation of our lives—is an eminently practical exercise of the understanding, and brings home the great facts of our religion as facts to the mind, with a feeling of their reality which the most highly raised efforts of the imagination cannot give them; and thus makes rational deliberate faith a counterpoise to the engrossing influence of sense.'*

Thus also Dean Mansel: 'Approved divines are referred to as practically making the doctrine the real test of the admissibility of the miracles,

* *Aids to Faith*, pp. 43, 62, 64.

and so acknowledging the right of an appeal, superior to that of all miracles, to our own moral tribunal. The feeling which dictates this judgment is intelligible at least, if not excusable, as the result of a reaction against the opposite error of a former generation ; but when the judgment is advanced, as it often is, not merely as an expression of the personal feelings of an individual, but as a general statement of the right grounds of belief, it is at best nothing more than an attempt to cure one evil by another, introducing a remedy, on the whole, worse than the disease.*

Canon Cook,† after a thoroughly appreciative tribute to Grotius and his successors, gives this as his own opinion : ‘ The whole result of enquiry into the truth of Christianity will depend upon the effect produced upon you by the Personality of Jesus Christ. If a careful study of His words, of His works, does not constrain you to recognize in Him a divine teacher, if it does not lead you to discern the Being in whom alone humanity attained to that ideal perfection of which philosophers had ever dreamed, but of which they deemed the realization was impossible, nay, more, a Being in whom the moral and spiritual attributes of Deity, perfect

* *Aids to Faith*, pp. 30, 31.

† *Lecture on the Completeness and Adequacy of the Evidences of Christianity.*

holiness, and perfect love, were manifested ; then indeed I admit, nay, I am in truth convinced, that no other evidences will have any real or permanent weight upon your spirit. If, on the other hand, you accept Jesus as your Teacher and Master, simply and wholly because He has won your heart and conquered your spirit, then all other evidences will fall into their proper place ; they will not be set aside, contemned, or neglected—had they been useless they would not have been given—but they will be used as subsidiary and supplementary, enabling you to give a reason for the faith that is in you, both for your own satisfaction, and for the defence and advancement of Christian truth. The one great evidence, the master evidence, the evidence with which all other evidences must stand or fall, is Christ Himself speaking by His own word.'

Dr. Stoughton asserts,* 'The place in the sphere of evidence occupied by the miracles of Jesus is not exactly the same to us that it was to the multitudes who witnessed them ;'† and fully agrees in

* *Lecture on the Nature and Value of the Miraculous Testimony to Christianity.* (Hodder and Stoughton, 1871.)

† Bishop M'Ilvaine argues, 'that in being called to examine the credibility of the gospel miracles by the evidence of testimony, we have a special advantage over those who were present to try them by the evidence of the senses.' See *The Evidences of Christianity in their External Division*, by Bishop M'Ilvaine, lecture v. sec. v. See also quotation from Bishop Fitzgerald, above.

the remark of Dr. Vaughan, 'We do not ask any one to begin with the miracles; to regard power, and still more the record of power centuries afterwards, as the one irresistible proof of the truth and divine origin of a revelation. This has been done—done perhaps too long—done certainly in this age without conviction.'* And yet, just before this, Dr. Vaughan says, 'Without miracle, Revelation could hardly have gained its first footing in a busy, preoccupied, and unspiritual world.'† But if this be so, how is the force of that class of evidence diminished? Why should it be weaker because it is addressed to the reason and not to the senses? The above proposition is indeed nearly identical with that which Paley sets himself to prove in the second part of his work, ch. ix. sect. 2.‡ Have we any right to assume that any class of evidences is relatively to any other class weaker than at first?§ What is asserted of miracles may also be asserted of the character of Christ. Dr.

* I have, however, lately read of more than one instance of thorough conviction produced by reading M'Ilvaine's evidences. He does 'begin with the miracles.'

† *Christ the Light of the World*, pp. 171, 172.

‡ And so Whately: 'The difficulty of believing the miracles recorded in our sacred books is much less than the opposite difficulty of believing that the Christian religion was established without miracles.'—*Lessons on Christian Evidences*. So Butler: 'These miracles are a satisfactory account of those events, of which no other satisfactory account can be given.'—*Analogy*, Part II. chap. vii.

§ Of course, *prophecy* gains in strength by its fulfilment.

Temple says, 'The early Christians could recognize, more readily than we, the greatness and beauty of the example set before them they had a keenness of perception which we have not, and could see the immeasurable difference between our Lord and all other men as we could never have seen it.* Contradictory to this, but still implying that there is something lost in reading of the great Exemplar instead of seeing Him, the Bishop of Ely says, 'Probably all men—even those who do not believe in Him—would confess that *if they could see* any one living just the life that is related to have been the life of Jesus, the man so living would be perfect in all parts, the very ideal of humble-hearted, active-spirited, pure-minded, high-souled humanity. He taught Himself by simply living Himself.'†

The question of the *relative value* of the evidence is distinct from that of the *order* in which it may be desirable to marshal them in any par-

* *Essays and Reviews*, p. 25.

† *Christian Evidence Society Lecture*, 1871. ^o The italics are mine. I add a few references to the Gospels which may more or less suggest what added force may have accompanied Christ's words to those who saw Him as He spoke: Matt. viii. 3; xii. 49. Mark, iii. 5, 34; v. 32; vii. 34; viii. 12; x. 16, 21, 23. Luke, vii. 13, 14, 44; xiv. 25; xix. 5, 41; xxii. 61; xxiii. 28. John, xi. 35, 38, 41, 43; xvii. 1. I give these references to show that the miracles and the example keep the same relative position, as far as mere vividness is concerned. On this subject (as regards miracles) see *Litton*, p. 99.

ticular age, or to any particular audience.* On this subject Bishop Daniel Wilson says, 'We wish to claim for the external evidences the rank to which they are entitled in fair argument, and to protest against the additional and auxiliary evidences being improperly resorted to in the first instance, to the neglect of the palpable credentials of the Christian message. . . . Still, we object not to any part of them being separately considered, according to the disposition, age, talents, and information and circumstances of men. The Christian evidence in each division and subdivision of it, is so clear and convincing to a fair and sincere inquirer, as to admit of a distinct discussion and exhibition, if it be conducted with good faith. . . . To a serious, candid mind, we are willing to open at once any part of the whole subject of the evidences of Christianity; whilst to a captious and unreasonable inquirer, we propose the strict rules of debate, and demand the orderly examination of the credentials of the religion. If, however, after all, men will unreasonably demand an exposition of the internal character of Christianity in the first place, or will dwell on objections raised against its particular constitution, we descend on the ground they have chosen, and without relin-

* I do not mean that an estimate of the relative value will not be *likely* to influence the order, but it need not do so *necessarily*.

quishing our right to assume a higher position and to insist only on the direct proofs of it, we meet them where they stand,* and show them the inward excellency of our religion from the internal evidences, or the weakness and inconclusiveness of their objections from the analogical.†

I have brought together specimens of the different estimates which different minds may form of the relative strength and importance of the various evidences of Christianity ; but let no one imagine that they disclose any weakness in those evidences ; rather they arise out of the very abundance of resources at the command of the Christian apologist. Neither let any one suppose that a change in the line of battle betrays any consciousness of weakness, or misgiving about the ultimate issue of the conflict. The Greeks made several changes of disposition in front of their watchful and formidable enemy before the battle of Plataea ; Mardonius took it for weakness ; but he found that his exultation was unfounded.

But may we not find it good to turn for awhile from these estimates of the several evidences of

* Be it observed, that it was to the *direct* proof that the apologetic writers of a former age were challenged. See Bishop Fitzgerald in *Aids to Faith*, p. 47.

† Introductory Essay to Butler's *Analogy*, pp. xcv. xcvi.

Christianity, to ascertain, if we may, *what comparative value* CHRIST HIMSELF attached to each, and what He teaches concerning them? Surely all the teaching of Christ on the subject cannot be thought inapplicable to our own day. Of course, I write only for those who admit Christ Himself to be the grand authority on the subject, where He has spoken on it;* and I invite the reader to consider what He says. No one will suppose me to mean that the spoken words of Christ embrace *everything* that bears upon the evidences of His mission in the Holy Scriptures; or that there is not important evidence not men-

* I am glad to quote passages from such able writers as Mr. Birks and Dr. Goulburn, as affording authority for the *principle* of this book. The former observes: 'In the discourse which follows the cure of the impotent man, our Lord assigns His miracles a middle place among the proofs of His Divine mission;' and afterwards asks, 'How did Christ and His Apostles treat the external evidences and the moral elements of the message they delivered to mankind?'—*Bible and Modern Thought*, chap. iii. and iv. Dr. Goulburn says, 'Our Lord Himself seems to have rested the evidence on three main supports: 1, Miracles; 2, Purity of Doctrine, re-echoed by the moral sense; 3, Prophecy. No doubt one age will attach greater weight to one of these branches of evidence, another to another. But is it wise, or is it reverent, to knock away one of the fair columns on which the Lord Himself has rested the truth of His holy religion?'—*Replies to 'Essays and Reviews,'* p. 33. So also Dr. Heurtley, p. 194: 'If the appeal to miracles is not valid now, it was not valid when it was made by our Lord.' And in his *University Sermons* (1871) pp. 139, 140. A reviewer of the *Christian Evidence Lectures*, in the *Guardian*, speaks of Canon Cook as 'following the obvious, though often neglected, teaching of Holy Scripture.'

tioned or alluded to in the Scriptures. The one point which seems to me of sufficient importance to demand a separate consideration is,—what were the proofs which Christ Himself dwelt on, and what the comparative importance He assigned to each.

I now therefore propose, following the approximate harmony given by the Archbishop of York in his article on the Gospels,* to collect the passages which bear upon this subject, adding some comments which may serve as a help in gathering, as we proceed, the relative value Christ attached to the various evidences which He brings forward, so as to enable us to form a general judgment on the whole.

And may I not invite the sceptic to accompany me in this inquiry, assuming ‘provisionally’ the genuineness of the four Gospels, and taking the miracles only as ‘alleged?’ Christianity is a fact of history, past and contemporaneous, of very considerable dimensions. It is a phenomenon that every reasonable man ought to deal with,—that Christ is ‘believed on in the world;’† and no man ought to be uninterested in the ‘theory of belief’ in Him, *as it stands on the ground on which He is related to have placed it.* Consider-

* In Smith’s *Dictionary of the Bible*.

† ‘Incredibile est mundum rem tam incredibile credidisse.’
—Augustine.

ing the historical claims of the religion, and its transcendent importance, if true, unbelief on such a subject ought surely to be tried by fire; what is now proposed, however, can hardly be regarded as anything but a mild preliminary process.

CHAPTER II.

COLLECTION OF PASSAGES.

§ 1. *Christ and Nathanael.*

JOHN, I. 45-fin.

Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see. Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed in whom is no guile! Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee. Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel. Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig-tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these. And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Henceforth (ἀπ' ἄρτι) ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.

WE have here, at the outset of St. John's Gospel, the key-note struck of a train of teaching that reappears again and again throughout it. 'Greater

things' than miraculous knowledge, things that to a spiritual insight would be greater, are distinctly declared to be revealed. We have here, too, at the beginning of this Gospel, a narrative corresponding in some respects to the story of Thomas at its close ; and we can see a certain similarity between the two characters, and Christ's way of dealing with each. It may be well to place the points of resemblance side by side.

NATHANAEL.

'Can any good thing?'

'When thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee.'

'Thou art the Son of God.'

'Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig-tree, believest thou? Ye shall see heaven open.'

THOMAS.

'Except I shall see, I will not believe.'

'Reach hither thy finger and behold my hands.'

'My Lord and my God.'

'Because thou hast seen me thou hast believed. Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.'

Much has been said, and beautifully, of the loving consideration of Jesus for the sceptical Thomas ; but we see the same spirit in His treatment of the objecting Nathanael. Philip announces to Nathanael his discovery of the long-expected Messiah in 'Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.' But the very mention of this place, which seems to have been notorious for wickedness, suggests to the mind of Nathanael an antecedent improbability ;

and he asks incredulously, 'Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?' Philip returns the model answer, 'Come and see.' As Nathanael is complying with this reasonable request, he hears these words from Jesus greeting his approach, 'Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile.' These were the loving words of One who ever looked on the best side of any character that had a groundwork of sincerity in it. But Nathanael's sincerity seems to have been mixed not only with some prejudice, but with bluntness, ruggedness, and a certain suspiciousness. Such seems to be the spirit with which he abruptly meets the greeting of Christ by the question, 'Whence knowest thou me?' as if he suspected the Speaker of speaking at random, or with the flattery of one eager to obtain adherents; as if his prejudice against Him was confirmed rather than removed by the praise given him. Jesus, however, answers the question as the question of a sincere inquirer, 'Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee.' Whether there is a special reference to anything that then exercised Nathanael's mind, or not, he at once recognises the miraculous knowledge of the Speaker, and with all the force and frankness of his character, he utters the fullest and most ardent confession of the Messiahship of Jesus.

But Jesus receives it very calmly, and gives Nathanael to understand that his faith shall have a better foundation than this to rest upon. 'Thou shalt see greater things than these,' (not 'than *this*,' but 'than *these*,' the whole class of miracles); and this He explains by adding, 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, Henceforth ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.' The words ἀπ' ἄρτι (henceforth*) are of doubtful genuineness, but the meaning with or without them is much the same. The glories of a period beginning from the opening of the Lord's public ministry, *and at this day not completed*, are described. The words have a plain reference to the *ladder of Jacob*, and imply that what he then saw was now to receive its fulfilment: that He, the Son of man, was the dwelling of God, and the gate of heaven.† What is greater than miracles is then—Christ Himself, the dwelling of God, the medium of intercourse between earth and heaven. For when He says to Nathanael, 'Thou shalt see what is greater than these' (μεῖζω τούτων) *in this connexion*, He must mean, better able to produce conviction, or able to produce a better *kind* of conviction. In either

* So translated, Matt. xxvi. 29, Rev. xiv. 13.

† Alford. See numerous commentators cited by him *in loco*.

case miracles are here put in the second rank ; nor disparaged in themselves, but in comparison of something else, that knowledge of Christ Himself which leads men to say with the patriarch, ' Surely God is here.'

§ 2. *The Sign which Christ gave of His Mission.*

JOHN, II. 18 *sqq.*

Then answered the Jews and said unto him, What sign shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things? Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? But he spake of the temple of his body. When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them ; and they believed the scripture, and the word that Jesus said unto them.

HERE we have a set answer from Christ to the demand of the Jews for a sign. Neither on this nor any other occasion would He comply with the demand for a miracle on the spot, though we learn from v. 23 that He did work miracles during this passover,—doubtless miracles of benevolence, and not *mere* signs. But He did

give a sign which they might think of afterwards, and that sign the miracle of His own Resurrection. He thus early brought into prominence the grand fact which was to be especially borne witness to by His apostles when preaching the Gospel. It is to be noted, however, that in doing this He makes the same claim to indwelling Godhead as when speaking to Nathanael. If He then gave Nathanael to understand that He was Himself the true Bethel, the house of God, He even more plainly intimates here that His body is the abode of Deity, by calling it 'this temple.'

Let us also note that He adds the force of prediction to the grand proof of His Divinity afforded by His Resurrection. We might at first suppose that the Resurrection was an event so stupendously miraculous that it would need no additional emphasis to be given it in any other way. But, accustomed as the Jewish mind was to the idea of miracles, it was by no means superfluous to give it all the added force derived from its being a subject of prophecy by Christ Himself, as well as in the Old Testament Scriptures. 'His disciples remembered, and believed the Scriptures, and the word that Jesus had spoken to them.' So St. Paul, in going over to the Corinthians the heads of the Christian creed, says, 'I delivered unto you how that Christ died for our sins ac-

according to the Scriptures, and that he was buried, and rose again the third day *according to the Scriptures.*' And Jesus Himself said when opening the Scriptures to His disciples after His Resurrection, '*Thus it is written*, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day.' And in His last discourse before His Death, when He foretells His Resurrection and Ascension, He adds, 'Now I have told you before it is come to pass, that when it come to pass, ye may believe;' *i.e.*, as Alford explains it, in the fullest sense of the word. '*Neque enim Eum Dei Filium non et ante credebant: sed cum in Illo factum esset quod ante predixit, fides illa quæ tunc quando illis loquebatur fuit parva, et cum moreretur pœne jam nulla, et revixit et crevit.*' (*Aug. in Joh. Tract 79.*) Here then it is plain that Christ brings the miracle of His own Resurrection into special prominence, while we see by inference the great importance He gives to prophecy.

§ 3. *Nicodemus a Representative Man.*

JOHN, II. 23—III. 3.

Now when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man : for he knew what was in man. There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews : the same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God : for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

THIS passage is of importance inferentially. Though the observation of the Evangelist himself is of the greatest interest and significance, it does not come within our present purpose to consider it ;* but there seems no doubt that he

* If it be thought that St. John, by this remark of his own, and by relating again and again the words of Christ to the same effect, studiously disparages the evidence of miracles ; it may be answered, that it is not because he thinks less of miracles, but because he thinks more of the spiritual insight which dispenses with them ; since he alone relates Christ's first miracle (chap. ii.), His most sifted miracle (chap. ix.), and His greatest miracle (chap. xi.). Mr. Birks remarks, 'All the main divisions of this gospel, and all its chief discourses, depend on some miracle of our Lord.'

gives Nicodemus as one, and that a remarkable, example out of many, who believed in consequence of witnessing the miracles of Christ, to whom, *while their faith rested there*, He would not commit Himself by acknowledging them for His full disciples. So when Nicodemus makes this profession, Jesus stops him short by the memorable words, 'Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.' As if He had said, 'Something more than the conviction arising out of my miracles is needed for seeing the kingdom which I am proclaiming, even that spiritual life which comes immediately from the Spirit of God.' The faith that rests on miracles appears here as only ancillary, useful so far only as it may lead on to the higher faith, having an insight of its own, of those who are born of God.

§ 4. *The Capernaite Nobleman.*

JOHN, IV. 47, *sqq.*

When he heard that Jesus was come out of Judæa into Galilee, he went unto him, and besought him that he would come down, and heal his son : for he was at the point of death. Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe. The nobleman said unto him, Sir, come down ere my child die. Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way ; thy son liveth.

THE first answer of Christ to the nobleman, which is the point to be noted in this passage, has been variously understood. It seems to indicate the very different points of view from which Jesus and the nobleman respectively viewed the subject of his request. The nobleman's one concern was the recovery of his child. The answer of Jesus strikes us at first as unsympathetic. In truth, it was with a far deeper evil that His feelings were at this time especially occupied,—the want of faith in those around Him. The absorbing thought in the mind of the one was, 'How shall my child recover?' The absorbing thought in the mind of the Other was, 'How shall these hearts be inspired with faith?' Many of the Samaritans had believed because of His word ; now Jesus feels Himself, as

it were, in a lower atmosphere, and as if thinking aloud, says, 'Except ye see signs and wonders (τέρατα) ye will not believe;'* and seems so engrossed by this reflection, that He simply replies to the nobleman's passionate entreaty, 'Sir, come down ere my child die,' by the brief sentence, 'Go;† thy son liveth.' Two things are observable in this miracle; 1st, that the evidential side of it is brought out more strongly than the beneficent; and 2ndly, that, nevertheless, Christ implies a low estimate of *mere miracle-faith* (Alford), or rather perhaps we should say a low estimate of the state of the mind that required such evidence.

* οὐ μὴ πιστεύσητε, as in xx. 25.

† πορεύου, as in Luke, x. 37.

§ 5. *Christ and the Leper.*

MATT. VIII. 4.

His leprosy was cleansed. And Jesus said unto him, See thou tell no man ; but go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded for a testimony unto them : εἰς μαρτύριον αὐτοῖς. 'A testimony against them : ' so Alford and Trench. In Mark, v. 11, εἰς μαρτύριον αὐτοῖς = εἰς μαρτύριον ἐπ' αὐτούς in Luke, ix. 5.

THIS miracle is addressed as evidence solely to the priests, a purpose for which its peculiar character exactly fitted it, all other publication of it being interdicted. It is noteworthy how Christ availed Himself of the laws of leprosy to have this miracle, as it were, registered. At the same time, if the above explanation is correct, the object of this was rather negative than positive : 'Ut inexcusabiles essent sacerdotes, si in ipsum non crederent cujus miracula probâssent. Ut testimonium contra se haberent, impie se facere, quod Christo obluctarentur.*' We see here importance attached to a single miracle, but in a special point of view, viz., as neutralizing or weakening opposition.†

* Maldonatus and Witsius, quoted by Trench.

† The same thing is to be observed in Christ's command to His disciples not to forbid one whom they found casting out devils in His name : 'for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name that can lightly speak evil of me.'

§ 6. *Christ and the Gadarene Demoniac.*

MARK, V. 17-19.

And they began to pray him that he would depart out of their coasts. And when he was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed him that he might be with him. Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.

THIS passage speaks for itself. Christ had been requested by the Gadarenes, and He complied with the request, to leave their country. They had thus shut themselves out from hearing His words, but He would not leave them without means of conviction. He therefore directed the restored demoniac, who zealously obeyed the direction, to publish among them the miracle of which he was the living proof. He was to make them see that it was a great thing, and also a compassionate thing. Here then the whole work of proof is thrown upon miracle ; and we may mark the forbearance and kindness of Christ in sending these people the only means of conviction which their opposition had left possible.

§ 7. *Christ and the Scribes at the Healing
of the Paralytic.*

MATT. IX. 6.

But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house.

THIS is a strong case of a miracle wrought to vindicate Christ's claim to Divine authority. He had declared to the paralytic brought to Him to be cured, that his sins were forgiven. The Scribes said, 'Who is this that speaketh blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?' Luke, v. 21. (See Trench's Notes on this Miracle.) The objection was just, unless it could be proved that Christ had the power which belongs to God alone. And this the miracle was wrought expressly to prove. Here then great stress is laid on one miracle. This is all that it is strictly within our purpose to remark. But it may be worth observing what St. Luke says of the 'amazement' and 'great fear' that filled the beholders. There was nothing exceptionally wonderful in the miracle itself; the awe must have arisen from its bearing on the stupendous claim of Him who wrought it.

§ 8. *Christ at Jerusalem at the Second Passover.*

JOHN, v. 33, *sqq.*

Ye sent unto John, and he bare witness unto the truth.

But I receive not testimony from man : but these things I say, that ye might be saved. He was a burning and a shining light : and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light. But I have greater witness than that of John ; for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me. And the Father himself which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape. And ye have not his word abiding in you : for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not. Search the Scriptures ; for in them ye think (*ὅμειψ δοκεῖτε*) ye have eternal life : and they are they which testify of me.

LET us first mark from the context the manifest claim to Deity which these proofs were brought forward to support. Jesus had said, 'My Father worketh hitherto, and I work;' and the Jews saw most distinctly that in saying this, He 'said that God was his Father, *making himself equal with God.*' In vindication of this claim, He brings forward the testimony of the Baptist ; then a greater testimony (for 'John did no miracle,') in the 'works' which He performed at His Father's behest, by which we are doubtless to

understand chiefly, if not exclusively, His miracles. There is an emphasis in His appeal to these, stronger even than appears in the English version —(αὐτὰ τὰ ἔργα ἃ ἐγὼ ποιῶ). For what follows, I gladly adopt Alford's paraphrase: 'The works of which I have spoken, are only *indirect* testimonies: the Father Himself who sent me, has given *direct* testimony concerning me. Now that testimony cannot be derived by you nor by any man by direct *communication* with Him: for ye have never heard His voice, nor seen His shape. *Nor in your case*, has it been given by that inward witness which those have in whom His word abides; for ye have not His word abiding in you, not believing on Him whom He has sent. Yet there is a *form* of this direct testimony accessible to you; *search the Scriptures.*'

There is here apparently an ascending scale of testimony;—the Baptist's *unmiraculous* witness; Christ's own miracles; the internal witness of the indwelling word of God, to which searching the Scriptures is a means.

Before leaving this passage, let us remark Christ's condescension and patient kindness to those who were seeking to kill Him. While asserting His transcendent claims, He meets them to a great extent on their own ground. He appeals to the testimony of John (though needing

no human testimony), because he was one in whose light they once had been willing to rejoice. He appeals to the Scriptures, because in them they held that they had eternal life. In short, it is for their own sake that He desires them to admit His claims ;—‘that ye might be saved.’

§ 9. *Christ's Answer to the Baptist's Disciples.*

MATT. XI. 2, *sqq.*

Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, and said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another? Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see : The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.

WHAT the motive was that prompted this inquiry, is not told us, and must ever remain a matter of conjecture. The *primâ facie* impression is probably the true one, that it was an inquiry

on the Baptist's own account.* There may have been something in his case not wholly unlike the case of one who, having been long a Christian, still finds it good, for his own sake and for the sake of those who may be influenced by him, to review the evidences of his religion.

The answer of Christ is very noteworthy, and certainly gives great prominence to the evidence of miracles; and that, *to one who had to rely for it on the testimony of others*. This will appear the more remarkable if we consider that John had already heard of the works of Christ; notwithstanding which, the main answer sent by his messengers was simply their own report of what they heard and saw of His miracles. Yet there is something, and that of no small importance, added to the enumeration of the miracles,—‘to

* Archbishop Thomson says: ‘Those who maintain that it was done solely for the sake of the disciples, and that John needed no answer to support his faith, show as little knowledge of the human mind as exactness in explaining the words of the account.’ Baxter’s statement is remarkable: ‘Whereas in my younger days I never was tempted to doubt of the truth of Scripture or Christianity, but all my doubts and fears were exercised at home, about my own sincerity and interest in Christ, and this was it which I called unbelief; since then my sorest assaults have been on the other side, and such they were, that had I been devoid of internal experience, and the adhesion of love, and the special help of God, and had not discerned more reason for my religion than I did when younger, I had certainly apostatised to infidelity.’ See further extract in note to chap. iii.

the poor the gospel is preached.' This seems to connect the answer of Christ with the prophecies of Isaiah. No one would contend that these miracles exhaust the glowing language of Isaiah xxxv., but rather we must suppose that the prophecy helps to give a symbolical character to the miracles, as betokening the greater blessings of Divine grace. 'In cures of the blind there are parables of spiritual illumination: in the cleansing of lepers, parables of spiritual purification.* So that the transition is easy to that other prophecy alluded to here, and quoted in the synagogue of Nazareth: 'The Lord hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor,' *i. e.* good tidings to the meek.† And the concluding words, 'Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me,' clearly imply that the evidence afforded by miracles, however strong, will not of itself prevent this offence. Indeed, though the prominence given to miracles in this passage is much to be observed, and is to be borne in mind when we attempt to estimate the aggregate weight which Christ gives to them, it is also to be observed that He passes on at once from them to the *nature* of His mission, as if that was at least a co-ordinate evidence; and it is no doubt in reference to *that*, that

* Dr. Stoughton.

† Isa. lxi. 1.

the implied warning is given.* The *nature* of Christ's mission, when thoroughly understood, will ever be confirmatory to some, a stumbling-block to others.

* Or, as Archbishop Thomson views it, 'grave encouragement.' It may be doubted whether the song of Zacharias has been sufficiently taken into account in considering the Baptist's state of mind. Alford says, it 'serves to show to us the exact religious view under which John was educated by his father.' Now this song admits almost of a formal division: the general subject, *κίρας σωτηρίας* (horn of salvation), branches off into two parts, *σωτηρίαν ἐξ ἐχθρῶν* (salvation from enemies), and *σωτηρίαν ἐν ἀφίσει ἁμαρτιῶν* (salvation in the forgiveness of sins). We know how thoroughly John embraced the latter—how he pointed to Jesus as the Lamb of God that beareth the sin of the world. It is likely, therefore, that he not less thoroughly received the former, in the literal sense in which Zacharias would probably teach it him. And as he would look for this deliverance from enemies as not only literal but near at hand, there was room for him to ask whether Christ really combined in Himself the two characters of temporal and spiritual deliverer, or whether in the former character, on which in his prison-hours he would most naturally dwell, they were to look for another. Christ's answer seems to say, 'Hold fast your faith in One whose Kingdom is not of this world, and in that you shall find a blessing.'

§ 10. *Chorazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum ; Tyre, Sidon, Sodom.*

MATT. XI. 20-24.

Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most* of his mighty works were done, because they repented not: Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for Sodom at the day of judgment, than for thee.

THE awful reference to the day of judgment gives a most solemn character to this whole passage; and the evidential aspect of Christ's miracles is here almost lost in the ulterior result aimed at, not the mere conviction of the understanding, but—repentance. See Luke, xvi. 30, 31. But still

* αἱ πλεῖσται δυνάμεις αὐτοῦ: this, being the Evangelist's own expression, does not fall within our scope; but it may be noticed as an illustration of the *numerical* account the Jews took of miracles, as shown in a passage that has been often observed—John, vii. 31. See also John, xi. 47.

this passage has a bearing on the gradation of evidence, as will appear on a little consideration.

It is remarkable that we have here, in one of the synoptical gospels, an expression that, like those we have met with in St. John, conveys by implication the claim of Deity.* What are we to understand by Capernaum being exalted to heaven? No doubt, the distinction conferred on it by Christ's residence there; so that it is called 'his own city,' chap. ix. 1. Bearing this in mind, we see that the places have their distinct order, thus:—

Tyre	}	Chorazin
Sidon	}	Bethsaida
Sodom		Capernaum.

Chorazin and Bethsaida had seen the mighty works of Christ. Capernaum had seen them; but, *besides this*, had had the advantage of being Christ's chief place of residence. The works done in Chorazin and Bethsaida would have sufficed for the conversion of Tyre and Sidon. The works done in Capernaum, *added to the power of Christ's life among them*, would have availed for the conversion of those who were

* I do not mean to allege this, *of itself*, as a proof; but as harmonising exactly with the claims we find elsewhere, not only in St. John, but in the Synoptists. See, *e.g.* § 14.

‘sinners before the Lord exceedingly;’ or at least of so many of them as would have saved Sodom from destruction. Accordingly, Christ solemnly declares that a corresponding gradation will obtain at the judgment. The least that can be inferred from this passage is that, other things being equal, that place had the most convincing proofs of Christ’s mission where most of His life had been spent; but the special responsibility that is charged upon Capernaum* seems to mark the difference as very great indeed.

* ‘Hæc urbs beatior, quam Chorazin et Bethsaida : sed ex peccato infelicioꝝ : ideo cum Sodomis, non cum Tyro et Sidone confertur.’—*Bengel*.

§ II. *Self-imposed Restraint on Miracles.*

MATT. X. 8, 16.

Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils. . . . Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves.

LUKE, IX. 53-56.

And they did not receive him. . . . And when his disciples, James and John, saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.

MATT. XXVI. 52-54.

Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?

THESE passages have an important, though indirect, bearing on our subject, inasmuch as they show how strictly Christ's miracles were brought into harmony with His mission as a Saviour, and His design to gain men's hearts, and not merely their outward submission. He armed His apostles

with supernatural powers, and yet sent them forth as sheep among wolves ; and as He limited them in the use of these powers, so He limited Himself. He did indeed make use of some supernatural influence at times to extricate Himself from His enemies until His hour was come ; but then they were allowed the taunt, by which they expressed at once the condemnation of their own unbelief, and His greatest glory : ‘ He saved others, himself he cannot save.’ ‘ The kind of life He prescribed to His followers He exemplified in His own person in the most striking way, by dedicating all His extraordinary powers to beneficent uses only, and deliberately placing Himself for all purposes of hostility and self-defence on a level with the weakest.’ ‘ This temperance in the use of supernatural power is a moral miracle super-induced upon a physical one.’*

* *Ecce Homo*, chap. v. One is glad to quote these admirable statements from an author whose treatment of his subject too often jars painfully on the feelings of the reverent believer in the proper Deity of Christ. While traversing much of the same ground as *Ecce Homo*, Young’s *Christ of History* is in contrast to it both in tone and scope ; carrying, as it fearlessly does, the argument to its proper result ‘ Take only the earthly life of Christ, suppose only that in a broad, general sense, it is faithfully represented—behold only the *Man*—He shall indicate and demonstrate union with absolute Godhead’ (p. 9).

§ 12. *The Bread of Life.*JOHN, VI. 26, *sqq.*

Jesus answered and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled. Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you : for him hath God the Father sealed. Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent. They said therefore unto him, What sign shewest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? what dost thou work? Our fathers did eat manna in the desert ; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat. Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven, but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.

IT is plain that miracles did not affect the Jewish mind (see note on § 10) as we might have supposed they would. They are here reprovèd for caring less for the miracle, than (so to speak) for the *produce* of it. And when they are told that the work which God required of them was to believe on Him whom He had sent, they ask for a sign, something which should, as they thought, com-

mand faith. Such a sign is given them ; but not in such wise as they demanded. ‘The loaves were multiplied, but the process was not visible : let us *see* bread come down from heaven, like the manna given by Moses.’ When Christ says to them, ‘The bread of God is that which cometh down from heaven,’* and then adds explicitly (v. 51), ‘I am the living bread which came down from heaven’ (ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ἄρτος ὁ ζῶν, ὁ ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καταβάς), He means to say, ‘Ye now see a σημεῖον greater than the manna, even Me Myself, the true bread from heaven.’ ‘Quem quisquis gustat,’ Bengel happily says, ‘non jam aliud signum quæret ; nam in pane gustus ipse criterion est.’† Christ certainly implies here that He is His own evidence ; but it is to be observed that He introduces another most important element (which we shall meet with again) into the matter, by the assertion (vv. 44–46) that, to see this, a man must be taught of God.

* See Alford.

† Thus Stier : ‘I myself, standing before you, am the greatest sign from heaven, the wonder of all wonders ; he who believeth Me, and believeth on Me, will *inwardly experience* that it is so.’

§ 13. *A Sign from Heaven refused.*

MATT. XVI. 1-4.

The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting, desired him that he would shew them a sign from heaven. He answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather, for the sky is red : and in the morning, It will be foul weather to-day : for the sky is red and lowring. O ye hypocrites ! ye can discern the face of the sky ; but can ye not discern the signs of the times ? A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign ; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas. (See also xii. 38, 39 ; and Mark viii. 12. 'He sighed deeply in his spirit, and saith, Why doth this generation seek after a sign ?')

THIS demand for a sign from heaven took place after another miraculous feeding of a multitude.* In His answer Christ refused the sign from heaven above, but intimated that before long they should have one from the depths below,—the sign of the prophet Jonah. The same sign, otherwise expressed, He gave when asked for a sign at His first cleansing of the temple, the sign of His own resurrection (§ 2). 'Christ's answer seems to imply

* In chap. xii. it follows after Christ's answer to the charge of confederacy with Beelzebub, in which He says, 'If I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you.'

that it is mere hypocrisy in men to say that all they want is a little more proof. Signs of the times there were, sufficiently obvious to a good and honest heart; and men wilfully blind to them had no right to make their own conditions of belief. They were educated men who were now tempting Him. They were, therefore, well acquainted with the prophecies, and might see if these were not being fulfilled in Him.* No doubt this expresses the meaning; and what is here to be observed is, that the Sadducees are included with the Pharisees in the charge of hypocrisy. 'Pharisæos sæpe hoc nomine compellat. Cur et Sadducæos?' asks Grotius. Certainly the prejudice of the Sadducees against the grand sign, when 't came to pass, exceeded that of the Pharisees; but the hypocrisy consists in the refusing to give to the evidence of Christ's divine mission the same unbiassed and careful attention which men give to the ordinary interests of life.

The general result of this passage is, however, the same for our purpose as that of § 2. Christ's resurrection as a miracle, and as a fulfilment of prophecy (Jonah's history being typical), is brought into special prominence.

* *Judged by His Words.* Longmans, 1870.

'Might we but see a miracle, say some, how gladly would we become converts! They would not speak thus did they understand what conversion means.'—*Pascal*.

§ 14. *Peter's Confession of Faith.*MATT. XVI. 13, *sqq.*

When Jesus came into the coasts of Cæsarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I, the Son of man, am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist; some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He said unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.

THIS most remarkable confession concerns our purpose in that it ascribes to Christ the Sonship and the Divine nature *in a sense in which they could be in none else*,* but chiefly because of the ground on which Christ pronounces Peter blessed, viz. that this confession was a proof that he was taught of God. We have already met with the promise of this teaching (§ 12), and we shall meet with it again. Christ implies very strongly the necessity of it to a due apprehension of His Deity.

* Alford.

§ 15. *Christ's Challenge to the Pharisees.*

JOHN, VIII. 46, 47.

Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me? He that is of God, heareth God's words; ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God. *Διὰ τοῦτο ὑμεῖς οὐκ ἀκούετε, ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ οὐκ ἐστέ.* 'Subauditur, at vero : est enim oppositio. At vos ideo gravamini quæ dico audire, quia ingenio estis averso a rebus verè divinis.'—*Grotius*. The translation of *διὰ τοῦτο* by 'therefore' would in this place be better avoided, because it gives the impression of being used illatively. There are simply two distinct propositions; and the force of the 'therefore' is thrown forward, as in Isa. liii. 12, where the LXX. have *διὰ τοῦτο* followed by *ἀνθ' ὧν*. See also chap. x. 17.

THE immense importance in itself of this passage, with its context, including much of the preceding chapter, is obvious. But as we are dealing only with Christ's statements of His claims, we do not enter upon the whole of it. It is evident that Christ here takes His stand upon a higher ground than before; or rather, that He declines to occupy, even for a time, the lower platform from which He argued in part of the fifth chapter of this Gospel. See § 8. The complete verbal contradiction between His words there, *Ἐὰν ἐγὼ μαρτυρῶ περὶ ἑμαντοῦ, ἡ μαρτυρία μου οὐκ ἔστιν ἀληθής* (v. 31), and His words here, *Κὰν ἐγὼ*

μαρτυρῶ περὶ ἐμαντοῦ, ἀληθῆς ἐστὶν ἡ μαρτυρία μου (v. 14),* may be reckoned among the proofs of the genuineness of this Gospel. It seems inconceivable that, if they were not really uttered, any one should have set them down as his own invention. The reconciliation of them is not entirely on the surface, though it becomes plain after a little consideration. In chap. v. Christ, after advancing the loftiest claims, descends to ground on which His hearers would be more open to conviction, and, while guarding Himself against being supposed to be dependent on human testimony, says, 'These things I say, that ye might be saved.' In entire agreement with this is the concession which is fully and frankly made, *while He is standing upon that level*, 'If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true;' *i. e.* 'You may fairly urge this objection to it, and demur to receiving it.' But here the case is totally different. The Pharisees had been hardening themselves against conviction; they had just sent officers to apprehend Jesus, and had seen them come back averring that their errand had failed because 'never man spake like this man;' and had vented their vexation in words of bitter scorn, 'Are ye also deceived? Have any

* 'If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true' (v. 31).
 'Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true' (viii. 14).

of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him? But this people who knoweth not the law are cursed.* Christ, therefore, does not now meet them as He once did, but simply challenges their faith, and in default of it peremptorily declares that they are not of God.† 'I am the light of the world,' He says. They reply, 'Thou bearest witness of thyself; thy record is not true;' which, *in this connexion*, simply means, 'We do not see or

* Of course the circumstances related in chap. viii. 1-11, would have a very powerful effect in increasing the enmity of the Pharisees; but as there is so much uncertainty about this passage, or about its place in this Gospel, I think it better not to rely on it. See Ellicott on the *Life of Christ*, pp. 252, 310.

† Mr. Gladstone, in his review of *Ecce Homo*, says, 'When we examine these six chapters (John, v.-x.), we seem to find in them a kind of progression, as if with a view to some special purpose.' The remark is very useful, but it might perhaps have been more so, if it had been supported by a separate examination of the eighth chapter, instead of this being treated as a repetition of the fifth. I believe that a close study of it will observe in it a stage between the fifth and the tenth. Christ's claim of equality with God, made by saying that God was His Father, however certain the construction, hardly reached the claim made by the assumption to Himself of the mysterious title, 'I AM,' which was, to a Jewish ear, probably more direct even than that, and little short of the full assertion, 'I and my Father are one.' And we may remark that the violence of His adversaries seems to have increased *pari passu* with the increasing distinctness of His claims. At first they only 'sought to kill him' (v. 18), apparently after some formal process; then ἤραν λίθους, ἵνα βάλωσιν ἐπ' αὐτόν (viii. 59); then ἐβάστασαν λίθους ἵνα λιθάσωσιν αὐτόν; (x. 31); the last expression probably marking a more determined attempt to inflict the punishment on the spot.

admit it.* The claim which Christ makes under this figure to be His own witness is maintained in all His answers to the Pharisees, and in accordance with it He asserts in plain words, 'Though I bear record of myself, my record is true;' while He never ceases to appeal to the witness of the Father. But it is the peculiar form of this self-witness which we find in the words at the head of this section, that specially demands our attention. We have before us a Being conscious of absolute sinlessness, knowing Himself to be perfectly holy, feeling Himself to be in faultless unison and never-failing sympathy with the mind of God, with no shadow of separate interest or desire even for a passing moment, but doing always such things as please Him (v. 29),—we have this Being of transparent holiness looking men full in the face, and demanding that, if they cannot impeach it, they shall receive what He says as truth—as God's words. The mysterious oneness of perfect holiness with perfect truth, which is here assumed, cannot perhaps be perfectly apprehended by us in its depth

* 'The sun illuminates the face of him who sees and of him who is blind, but it is seen by the one and not by the other. So Christ, the Light of the World, is everywhere present to all, even to the unbelieving; but they cannot see Him, because they have no eyes in their hearts.'—*Wordsworth*. Stier quotes from the Berleburg Bible, 'If the sun or the day could speak, and should say, I am the sun! and it were replied, No, thou mayest be the night, for thou bearest witness of thyself! how would that sound?'

and fulness;* but this is certain and patent, that Christ here sets forth, in the most prominent manner possible, and as sufficient in itself for evidence, His own personal character as a guarantee for His teaching being the very truth of God. And this claim is put forth with an authority to which every one who has any appreciation of holiness is expected to be amenable.

* Stier says, 'The great point is *this*, the sinless life is made valid *proof* of the truth of the doctrine; and this itself is a great and profound truth.' In what follows Stier seems at fault. The remark, that men cannot look into the heart, is not to the purpose; if it were, neither the absolute holiness of Christ, nor any relative holiness in any of His followers, could ever contribute any proof to Christianity. But when Christ declares that He has no other aim in life than the honour of God, He supposes that His hearers can understand the theory of such a life, and are quicksighted enough to detect any word or action inconsistent with it. If men recoil even from the contemplation of holiness; and, when forced to see what they ought to recognise as such, catch at any solution that comes to hand ('Say we not well, that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?'); they do not show that a sense of it is impossible, but that they have lost whatever sense of it they may once have possessed.

§ 16. *Christ at the Feast of Dedication.*

JOHN, X. 24-26, 37, 38.

Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly. Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not; the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me. But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works; that ye may know (*ἵνα γινῶτε*) and believe that the Father is in me, and I in him.

ON this occasion the Jews formed a circle round Christ (*ἐκύκλωσαν αὐτὸν**), and made a determined attempt to draw from Him a declaration for which they might stone Him on the spot as a blasphemer. But while He constantly implied His oneness with the Father, He always avoided putting Himself in the power of those who might make Him the victim of a sudden outbreak, or committing Himself by such a premature declaration of His Messiahship as should antedate the appointed hour in which He was to be 'lifted up,' according to His own predictions.

* The word seems to come from an eye-witness. It is used also in Luke, xxi. 20; Acts, xiv. 20; Heb. xi. 30; Rev. xx. 9.

In answer to their demand, 'If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly,' He refers them to the witness of the miracles which He wrought in His Father's name, and tells them that He had already virtually answered their question, and that the real reason why they did not believe on Him was the lack of that insight which belonged to His 'sheep.' He had said this before in other words; for 'Ye hear not God's words, because ye are not of God,' = 'Ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep.'

When He afterwards used language which to those who denied His claims could be nothing but direct blasphemy, and they were on the point of stoning Him,* after reminding them of the beneficence of the miracles He had wrought, He argues that as kings and rulers were in their Scriptures called 'gods' by virtue of their delegated authority, *à fortiori*, it could not be blasphemy in Him whom the Father had sanctified and sent into the world,

* λιβδέσει. Other graphic words (ἐβδυσσαν, πιάσαι, &c.) give vividness to the scene, of which Stier thus pictures the concluding part: 'Such is the sway which His words exert over their excited souls, that the stones at first remain unused *in* their hands, and are then laid down in order that they may answer Him.' To this we may add that the circle formed around Him seems, in the eagerness of debate, to have been broken, so that when their anger revives at the re-assertion of His Divinity, their object is to *seize* Him, not now to stone, but to bring to trial for blasphemy, as in chap. v.

to say, 'I am the Son of God.'* He then, without abandoning His position that spiritual insight would have led them to believe on Him, expressly says, 'If you have not witnessed miraculous powers in Me, I will not claim your faith; but if you have, though you have not that insight which fixes its faith personally on Me at once, let the evidence of the miracles remove your prejudices, *in order that* you may come afterwards to the fuller belief of My oneness with the Father.' Here, certainly, miracles are regarded as *ancillary*. 'Recognise the unquestionable testimony of the works,† that ye may be led on,' &c.—Alford.

* It seems as if vv. 37, 38, should be taken in connexion with what immediately precedes. Miracles especially belong to the claim of *de'legation*. Christ seems to say, 'There is a sense in which' a *delegated* authority has conferred on men the title of "gods" in Scripture; there is a sense also in which I stand alone as one with the Father. If you do not at once, by insight, acknowledge My higher claims, let the miracles lead you to acknowledge that I am justified in "making Myself god" in the lower sense, and then you may be led on to see that I am God in the highest sense of all.'

† Of course, 'believe the works' = 'believe what the works say,' or, as in chap. xiv. 11, 'believe me for the works' sake.' The works were *then* the objects not of faith, but of sight. Professor Powell speaks of miracles being regarded popularly as objects, not evidences, of faith, as if he did not see the confusion, which Dean Mansel quietly (perhaps too quietly) disposes of in a foot-note: 'When it is asserted that the miracles are objects, *not evidences*, of faith, it is obvious that the word faith is used in two different senses. In relation to *objects* it means an act of belief; in relation to *evidences* it means a doctrine to be believed.'—*Aids to Faith*, p. 31.

§ 17. *The Raising of Lazarus.*

JOHN, XI. 14, 15, 41, 42.

Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead : and I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe. . . . And Jesus lift up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always : but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me.

OUR concern with this most sublime and affecting narrative is only so far as Christ lays stress upon this great miracle as an important evidence of His mission. He said, when told of the illness of Lazarus, 'This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.' And in His words to His disciples He speaks of the raising of Lazarus as a miracle that was to confirm their faith ; in the words of His prayer, as a miracle that was to gain the faith of the bystanders. The Evangelist assures us that the latter result did in many instances follow ; nor can we doubt that the former did in all.

The implication of v. 15 is very noteworthy ; for Christ seems to assert that it was necessary for Him to be absent, in order that Lazarus might die.

Bengel remarks that we never read of any one dying in His presence. (Comp. vv. 21, 32.)

This miracle stands out with a distinctness and an emphasis that must affect our view of Christ's estimate of miraculous evidence in general.

§ 18a. *Christ's Last Discourse with His Disciples.*

JOHN, XIV. 8 *sqq.*

Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father. . . . And I will pray the Father, and he shall send you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth. . . . At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father.

THIS must be regarded as a most important passage in connexion with our subject, since

Christ speaks of a variety of proofs of His mission, —works, greater works, His words, and that union of His with the Father, which a true insight might have discovered, and which would be discovered by those who were under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

First He asserts that His miracles are of themselves proof enough of His mission; but He places them very decidedly below that self-evidencing power residing in Him which He plainly makes His highest evidence. He also makes this remarkable assertion, ‘He that believeth in me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto my Father.’* The reason given surely supplies the key to the interpretation of this promise. It was because of Christ’s ascent to the Father, and the consequent descent of the Holy Spirit, that His disciples would do greater works than He. Compare His words at the Feast of Tabernacles: ‘He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.’ The Evangelist adds, ‘But this he spake of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive; for the Holy Ghost was

* ‘Because I go unto my Father, and whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do,’ &c. Grotius considers that this should be read ‘in one breath.’ Beza so punctuates it.

was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified.' The explanations of these 'greater things' given by some commentators are quite trivial. To instance the cures wrought by the shadow of Peter, or by the handkerchiefs of Paul, or the gift of tongues itself, viewed simply as a miracle, as the 'greater things' promised, strikes one as unsatisfactory in the extreme.* Alford, in his note on this passage, doubtless gives the true sense: 'Greater works than those they did,—not in degree, but in kind: *spiritual* works, under the dispensation of the Spirit, *which had not yet come in.*' 'They should have much greater success in their ministrations than He had met with.'† 'Maximum signum,' Grotius says, from Chrysostom, '*gloriæ Christi, quod per absentem fierent quæ præsens non effecerat.*' But is this promise to be limited to the first believers? Does any one so limit the promise in chap. vii. 38, 39? It may well be doubted if any one would have thought of so limiting this, had it

* Is healing an absent person by a handkerchief greater than healing him by a word? Or is speaking in an unknown tongue greater than conferring the gift of speech itself?

† *Judged by His words*, p. 197. Doddridge, in the main, takes the deeper view of the promise. Robinson (*Scripture Characters*) gives as the meaning, 'miraculous operations, equal or superior;' but, as if dissatisfied with this explanation, adds in a note, 'The Apostles not only expelled demons,' &c., 'but . . . preached the Gospel with a success amazingly rapid and extensive.'

not been supposed that it was 'most evident in fact' that it must be so limited.* But why may we not suppose the 'works,' which were to be temporary, to be merged in the 'greater works,'—the material in the spiritual,—about which there is nothing temporary? For 'the wonders of grace and triumphs of the Spirit'† cannot, it is clear, be temporary, but must continue to the end of time, if the Spirit so continues (v. 16). Surely we may say that the flowing out of the Spirit from the hearts of true believers, in holy tendencies and sympathies, aims and aspirations, words and works, influence and assimilating power, through all time, is included in this promise; in other words, we have here indicated the whole evidence of the PROPAGATION and the MORAL EFFECTS of Christianity, resulting from the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the Church;‡ and Christ places this evidence above

* So Doddridge.

† Alford. The miracles themselves are, I suppose, universally regarded as parables of these 'greater things' (§ 9), which a believer may obtain for the unconverted by prayer for the Spirit in the name of Jesus (see above), or may be the means through the Spirit of effecting. As to the relative importance attached by St. Paul to miraculous powers, and *love*, that fruit of the Spirit which never 'falls out of use,' see I Cor. xii. xiii.

‡ 'I appeal to yourselves, whether there are not such witnesses to Christ within the range of your own knowledge You cannot doubt that religion in them is a reality, that it has wrought that in them which no human power could have wrought. And

that of the material miracles wrought by Him and by His followers.

Christ also speaks here of His *words*, of which He elsewhere says, 'They are spirit and they are life,' as if they carried with them to the hearing ear unmistakable proof of His Divinity. But above all He sets Himself as His own evidence, and treats it as a matter of surprise, that those who had been so long with Him as His disciples did not recognise His oneness with the Father. And then is brought out in its full force a truth of paramount importance, of which we have had intimations before, viz., that the discovery of His Divinity, which personal intercourse had failed to give, should be imparted by the secret teaching of that Spirit whom He promised to send. 'At that day,' *i.e.*, after the Holy Spirit has come,*

truly no human power has wrought it. It is the work of God's Spirit; and it is not they who bear witness to Christ, but the Holy Spirit who witnesses in them. And thus our Lord's words are verified, as they have been all along the ages which have passed since the day of Pentecost: "When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me."—HEURTLEY'S *University Sermons*, 1871, serm. v.

* So Scott, M. Henry, Alford, and others. The whole context points to this as the natural interpretation: observe, chap. xvi. 26: 'In that day ye shall ask in my name,' which must refer to the whole time of the Spirit's presence. 'The approaching the Father through Him shall be a characteristic of their higher state under the dispensation of the Spirit.'—ALFORD.

‘ye shall know that I am in my Father.’ Here is a clear statement of an inward witness which shall give to those who have it the *knowledge* of the Divinity of Jesus,—of His oneness with the Father.

It seems as if we had here the crown and complement of all Christ’s teaching on the subject. That insight which He challenges in vain till the Spirit of truth enters the heart, then perceives that ‘Jesus is the Lord.’ His Deity claims recognition by the intuition of men, but that intuition fails them, until revived by the Holy Spirit. The highest evidence is that which is addressed to insight, but only finds a response when the insight is imparted by the Holy Spirit.

§ 18*b*. *Christ’s Last Discourse with His Disciples.*

JOHN, XV. 22, 24.

If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin ; but now they have no cloke for their sin. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin ; but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father.

IN this place the *words* of Christ, and His *works*, appear to be co-ordinated, but it is in one

particular point of view; and the force of them is that attributed to miracles in § 5, the taking away excuses for *hostile* unbelief. Neither His works nor His words* permit this to be guiltless.

§ 19. *Christ's Prayer.*

JOHN, XVII. 20, 21.

Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; in order that (*iva*) they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

THOUGH this is an evidence that stands alone, and is not immediately compared with any others, it would not be right to pass it by unnoticed. Christ had been praying that His people might be kept through God's name, and sanctified through His word, which is truth; and this prayer He extends to all believers through all ages, *in order that* that they may all be one (*ἐν*). This is Alford's rendering; and he adds, 'This unity has its true and only *ground* in faith in Christ through the

* This is well touched upon by the author of *Judged by His words*, p. 299.

Word of God as delivered by the Apostles, and is therefore not mere outward uniformity, nor can any such uniformity produce it. At the same time its effects are to be real and visible, such that the world may see them.' We may take as a sort of commentary on this the beginning of the 4th chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians. They were to endeavour (*σπουδάζοντες*, marking the importance of it), to preserve the Spirit-given unity* (the oneness which must, as a fact, exist in all who have the Spirit) in the bond of peace; and this by lowliness, meekness, long-suffering, and loving forbearance; so that this evidence belongs, generally, to the moral effects of Christianity. We know how it was once said, 'See how these Christians love one another.' That Christianity disclaims—sets aside by St. Paul and St. John as 'nothing,' 'not of God,'—those who lack this grace, is a truth, which, if it does not weigh with the sceptic, most certainly ought to be seriously pondered by a vast number of those who name the the name of Christ.†

* So Ellicott *in loco*.

† Surely, the 'prayer for unity' in the Prayer-book is one that might be said 'after any of the former.' All Christians, in some way, ought to pray specifically for that which their Master prayed.

§ 20. *Christ's Declaration to Pilate.*

JOHN, XVIII. 37.

Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.

THESE remarkable words deserve a brief notice, because we see in them a repetition of what Christ had already said in other terms (§§ 15 and 16). 'He that is of God heareth God's words; the reason why ye do not hear them is that ye are not of God. Ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep; my sheep hear my voice.' We cannot fail to notice that He holds the same language to the bigoted Jews, and to the educated Roman, whom He well knew to be sceptical or indifferent as to all truth; but in the latter case He only puts the positive side of His former sayings, and withholds the negative or sterner side. In all these passages, however, is the same challenge to men's insight to acknowledge Him.

§ 21. *The Unbelief and Conviction of Thomas.*JOHN, XX. 24 *sqq.*

But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe (*ὃὐ μὴ πιστεύσω*). And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them. Then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then said he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands, and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side, and be not (*μὴ γίνου*) faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God. Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed : blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.

OUR series of extracts closes as it began. The convincing of a sceptical mind, and that by the discovery of omniscience, is a feature common to the narratives of Nathanael and Thomas, with the addition of the ocular proof so condescendingly granted to the latter.* Each also is carried

* Professor Leathes remarks, ' The very writer, whose works we have been considering, much as he dwells upon the need and power of faith, has yet given us the highest proof we can have of his perfect sympathy with unbelief, in the incident he alone has recorded in the life of Thomas. And it is not a little remarkable that a writer who has declared so plainly the nature and office, and dwelt so strongly on the importance of faith, should nevertheless have recorded also the most conspicuous instance in Scripture of persistent unbelief.

by the bound over the barrier of unbelief to a high point of faith. But it is remarkable that it was reserved for Thomas to utter the fullest confession that had yet been made at all of the Deity of his Lord. 'Nunc Thomas, ad fidem revocatus, Jesum non modo Dominum, ut antea agnorat ipse, et resuscitatum, ut condiscipuli affirmabant, agnoscit; sed etiam deitatem ejus altius quam quisquam adhuc confitetur.'* 'The words in which he expressed his belief contain a far higher assertion of his Master's divine nature than is contained in any other expression used by Apostolic lips.'†

It at least suggests to us a fair presumption that his own belief, firm and decided as it was, rested notwithstanding on the widest, loftiest, and most intelligent foundation possible, inasmuch as it commanded a prospect which embraced the whole area of unbelief.'—*Boyle Lectures for 1870.*

* Bengel.

† Stanley. Bishop Ellicott's note is striking and just: 'The declaration of St. Thomas has often and with justice been urged by writers upon our Lord's Divinity, but the exact circumstance under which it was made, and which add so much to its force, have not always been sufficiently considered. Let it then be observed that it is at the very time when our Lord is being graciously pleased to convince His doubting follower of the reality of His sacred body, in fact of His perfect *humanity*, that the Apostle so pre-eminently recognises his Lord's *Divinity*. With his hands on the sacred wounds, with evidence the most distinct that He whom he was permitted to touch was *man*, the convinced disciple, in terms the most explicit, declares Him to be God.'—*Lectures on the Life of our Lord*, p. 404. The argument will be the same whether we believe that Thomas actually touched or not. I agree with those whose impression is that he did not.

But this scene, deeply interesting as it is, concerns our present purpose mainly because of Christ's answer, which 'sums up the moral of the whole narrative.' It is most significant. Thomas, by his absence from the company of the Apostles at the time of Christ's former appearance, had placed himself in the condition of those whose faith must rest upon the testimony of others; but he refuses to accept that position; he demands ocular and palpable evidence.* When that is granted him, he does indeed spring to the fullest faith, and the most fervent confession of it; but he receives for it only a very qualified commendation. 'Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed.' Doddridge observes on this, 'that our Lord by no means intended to assert that every one who believes without seeing is happier than any one whatever believing on sight; for then the meanest Christian now would be more happy than the greatest of the Apostles; but only, that where the effects of that faith were

* 'It is plain not only that he must have had evidence of the very nature that our modern doubters ask for, and such as they cannot have, but also that every single convert whom Thomas brought to Christ must have believed upon less evidence than he himself had fixed as the limit on which alone he would believe.'—Leathes' *Boyle Lectures* for 1870, p. 125. Mr. Hutton speaks of Thomas as thus 'classified by Christ in regard to the nature of his faith.'—*Essays*, vol. I. p. 168.

equal, it argued greater simplicity, candour, and wisdom, to yield to reasonable evidence without seeing than could be argued merely from having believed *on sight* after sufficient evidence of another kind had been proposed.* It was therefore in effect telling Thomas, "It would have been more acceptable to Him, if he had not stood out so long. And it was doing it in such a manner as would be most calculated for the comfort and encouragement of believers in future ages."

'Wonderful indeed, and rich in blessing for us who have not seen Him, is this closing word.'† On the sudden approach of death it was in the heart and on the lips of that great and good man whose death-scene will ever be among the most deeply interesting passages of English biography.‡ What doubter's heart will not echo the wish, 'Let my last end be like his?'

* This seems nearer the truth than the remark of Bengel, 'Vix dubium est, quin Apostoli multitudinem fidelium, qui Jesum non viderant, majoris fecerint quam seipsos.' Apparently he has in view 1 Pet. i. 8.

† Alford.

‡ Stanley's *Life of Arnold*, sixth edition, p. 617. Strangely enough, in his article in *Smith's Dictionary*, Dr. Stanley calls it Christ's blessing on the faith of *Thomas*.

CHAPTER III.

INFERENCES.

THOUGH the reader will benefit more by drawing his own inferences from the materials I have endeavoured fairly to put before him, concerning the relative value Christ Himself attached to the various evidences of His mission, I ought not to shrink from stating what appear to me legitimate inferences and reflections arising therefrom.

I. The lowest evidence seems to be that of miracles; but I cannot see in Christ's expressions, taken as a whole, the extreme disparagement of them which is so current among some Christian writers of the present day; or that Christ (to use Alford's words) often *reproved* 'mere miracle-faith.' It is evident that He considered miracles sufficient evidence to render opposition to Him inexcusable; and further, ancillary to a personal faith in Him; though He expected of those who were about Him and heard Him, that they should overleap this preliminary stage. It is also to be noted what stress Christ laid on the crowning miracle of His

own Resurrection, which is included among the things to which the Apostles were to be witnesses. (Luke, xxiv. 48.) Indeed, the words of Christ, 'Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed,' *primâ facie* apply to this, though it cannot by any means be considered as exhausting their meaning.* At any events, it seems that Christ says quite enough to guard us against carrying into our estimate of miraculous evidence the not uncommon error of supposing that what is of less relative importance may not have a very considerable importance of its own. It does not follow that a thing is not *great*, because something else is *greater*.

2. Closely connected with miracles is the kindred evidence of prophecy. In His answer to John the Baptist, in His making the history of Jonah typical, and especially in His appeal to the writings of Moses (John, v. 45, 46), Christ gives more or less importance to prophecy. In His more private conversations with His disciples, especially as the time of His suffering was drawing near, He continually

* Bishop M'Ilvaine says, 'Here it is implied that they who believe the miracle of Christ's Resurrection on the strength of testimony, have a blessing beyond those whose conviction came by sight. This will appear from the consideration that evidence obtained from investigation, and appreciated by reflection, is more consistent with the state of probation and of moral discipline and responsibility in which we are placed, than evidence forced upon us by the involuntary agency of the senses.'

referred to it. But it is more particularly after His Resurrection that we find this. In His conversation with the disciples on the way to Emmaus, and again when He appeared to the Ten, He expounded the prophecies that related to Him. It does not fall in His way to speak of the evidence of prophecy in its widest range ; it is only 'the things concerning Himself' that He has occasion to refer to. But He quotes the prophet Daniel, when He adds a most remarkable prophecy of His own concerning the destruction of Jerusalem.

Christ does not, however, make a *comparison* of prophecy with other evidence, nor does He deliver His own prophecy as with an evidential object. It is brought out in the form of severe denunciation ; compassionate lamentation ; cautions against pretenders,* against premature expectations, and

* Matt. xxiii. 35-37 ; Luke, xix. 41-44 ; Matt. xxiv. 4-24. 'There shall arise false christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders ; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.' Comp. Deut. xiii. 1-3. Much has been made of these passages ; but the question in such a case would be very simple ;—whether the teaching was in contradiction to the revelation already given by God. If so, as God cannot change, it must at once be pronounced false. This seems to be the moral of the history of the disobedient prophet in 1 Kings, xiii. It was because he did not bear in mind that what God has once spoken stands for ever, that he believed the deceiver who asserted that an angel had been sent to reverse it. He might have said, 'What if it were so ?' It is the case supposed by St. Paul, Gal i. 8. See Dr. Heurtley's essay in *Replies to Essays and Reviews*, pp. 178, 9. The passage is well worth referring to.

against giving way under persecution ; directions for flight from the doomed city, and for special prayer. Hence we have not exactly the same data for fixing the place that Christ assigned to prophecy in the scale of evidence, as we have in regard to miracles ; but we seem warranted in giving it a place somewhat above miracles,* bearing in mind His own saying, though not confining it to His predictive words, ‘Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.’

3. If we have understood rightly the ‘greater things’ of § 18, the *propagation* of Christianity, viewed as a spiritual work only, and the *moral effects* of Christianity, rank above miracles, and we may conclude above prophecy also, as evidence. The moral effects of Christianity are an evidence that ought to bear pressing ; and it will be an evil sign if it ceases to be put forward in its due place by writers upon Christian evidence.† To these it would be presumptuous in me to speak ; but one may humbly commend this part of the subject to the especial consideration of all Christian people. Men are for the most part influenced less by general observation than by what they see immediately around them ; and the life of every

* See § 2 of the last chapter.

† It is admirably treated in M’Ilvaine’s *Evidences*. Lectures x and xi.

Christian, in every rank of life, must and will, however involuntarily on either side, have an influence on those who observe it; among whom there may be many more minds affected by doubt, latent, nascent, or recurrent, than we are apt to imagine. The effect of real, harmonious, and sustained Christian life on such is above all power of words to estimate. Beyond all question Christ has committed His people to the perilous dignity of being 'the light of the world;' and the world has a right to judge them by that standard. It can never be known till the day shall reveal it, how many stumbling-blocks have been placed in the way of honest sceptics by the inconsistencies of professed Christians, or how many who obeyed not the Word, have, without the Word, been won by holy lives that they have witnessed. 'They see how we live,' says good Bishop Patrick, 'but we can show them no miracle to convince them, nor can we make them hear the voice from Heaven for their conversion till we recommend our Bible to their serious consideration. And the only way to do that, is for us to live more justly, soberly, charitably, and piously, than the rest of the world. By which means they may be brought to have better thoughts of Jesus, by having good thoughts of us, and be induced to read our books, by seeing so much of them in our good works. And what

happy days might we not hope to see could we but use this argument to prove Jesus to be the Son of God, that no men are so good, so holy and pure, so peaccable and kind-hearted, so free from fraud or guile, as those who are called by His name. How glorious then would the name of our Lord be all over the world ! Shall we always let our Saviour want this noble testimony ? Shall we do nothing but talk of Him, and prattle of our faith, and damn all infidel people ? Alas ! alas ! these big words will do nothing. As long as they see us live no better than they, we shall not persuade them that we believe better. And therefore, let us have this worthy ambition in our hearts, to become witnesses ourselves unto Jesus. Let us study how to show forth His praises who hath called us into this marvellous light. Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity, and endeavour all he can to support the honour of His name and of His religion by a strict observance of all His holy commands.*

The manifestation of an inward unity in Christ by the outward exercises of love, brotherly kindness, and mutual forbearance, occupies a place of its own under this head ; and no words can do justice to its importance, when we consider the pro-

* Patrick's *Witnesses to Christianity*, 1675 (just before Mr. Pattison's period .

minence given it by Christ. If we need an illustration of it, we may see it in the history of the infancy of the Church: 'The multitude of them that believed was of one heart and soul . . . and with great power gave the Apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.' That is to say, the unmistakable manifestation of the internal unity of the believers gave a greatly added power to the miraculous evidence.

That Christianity has been grievously shorn of her strength in this particular cannot be concealed. But there are many good signs visible of a closer bond of union between Christians, that we may hope will yet become marked enough to arrest the attention of the sceptic; which, if he would even now give, he might discover much more of real unity among real Christians than a superficial view will disclose. And he should at least think, if Christianity has shown such power while this part of her evidence has been comparatively weak, she must possess a vitality and a strength the sources of which deserve to be explored.

The evidence arising from the fruits of Christianity ought also in all fairness to be weighed in conjunction with those parables of Christ which distinguish the profession from the reality of Christian life—numerous parables, of which that of the wheat and the tares is an example. It may

fairly be said that much that is deducted from this class of evidence ought to be added to the preceding one. Christ *well knew* how much Christians as a body would fall short of the high ideal which He set before them; and the fatal effects on the world of the scandals which He foresaw. Hence those solemn and mournful words: 'Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!' Is this to be ascribed to merely human prescience? In the midst of a prophecy of *events* we have this: 'Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.'* I

* There is a passage in *Judged by His Words*, so just and striking in itself, and so connected with this subject, that I cannot forbear quoting it. 'I cannot dismiss the parable of "the Virgins" without pointing to a prophetic touch of truth in it, truth patent to all Christendom to the present day. It will be admitted that the "bridegroom" is the Son of man. It is equally evident, then, that the virgins with lamps represent those who should profess His name during His bodily absence from this world—in other words, the members of His Church on earth. And I wish to call attention to the fact that in the parable all these are stated, all, without exception, to have slumbered and slept whilst the momentarily-expected bridegroom tarried. Now it is undeniably an article of belief with Christians (I speak of them as a body) that their Master will come again. It is a matter of past history and present observation that His immediate coming has often been thought at hand, always considered possible, and that the time when it will actually be is quite uncertain to this day, some of the best Christians since their Lord's departure from earth having made the greatest mistakes about it. Still, however that may be, there are thousands, I might say millions, of Christians now existing who feel as sure as they do of any-

do not mean that such warnings were uttered as a prophecy for direct evidential use, but that, in fact, they amount to a prophecy; and when circumstances too faithfully correspond to them, they do contribute no small amount of evidence, though it may be of a lower kind than that which belongs to this division.

The *propagation* of Christianity, as a work of the Spirit, belongs to this head. Miracles being common to both, the Apostles had greater success than their Master, because, as He told them, the Holy Spirit would be with them. Miracles being absent, it follows that the spread of Christianity (in its vital power) is wholly, according to Christ's teaching, the work of the Spirit. Wherever success, therefore, attends the labours of Missionaries, there is an evidence of the presence in the Church of that Spirit which Christ promised—an evidence of His having gone, as He said, to the Father.

4. In ascending to the still higher evidence of

thing that the Narrator of this parable will come again at some period of which the only thing certain is its suddenness. And yet . . . it is undeniable that they act not at all like men awake to the possibility of Christ coming in their time . . . It would have been enough for the conduct of the parable—indeed, some people might have thought it better—if the foolish virgins only had been represented as falling asleep. But the prescience of the Narrator foreshadowed what we still find strictly true, that the wise have their time of slumber as well.—pp. 183, 184.

Christ Himself, and His words, which He constantly speaks of as if they were a part of Himself,* we come to that proof, which, with a condition presently to be noticed, He puts the highest of all. In proportion to its transcendent importance is the difficulty of drawing it out. It is addressed to deeper perceptions than the others, and defies definition. Not indeed that 'the character of Christ' may not be drawn out in very beautiful language, though no language can do it justice; but the character of Christ is but a portion of the evidence we are now referring to. On one occasion (§ 15) we find Him challenging credence on that ground; but on numberless occasions He demands reception on the ground of an inherent right to be recognised as Divine in His words and in His whole being. On this account there is some danger in substituting 'the character of Christ' for that undefinable Personality of which it expresses the only describable side. And then is apt to follow this further dilution of this great theme, that some writers, in drawing out with great beauty the character of Christ, dwell on it in its aspect towards men, and not in its aspect towards God. Thus, for

* 'Jesus Christ, like the Gospel, which is no other than Himself, Jesus Christ was sincerity itself, and the invincible charm which is felt in contemplating and in listening to Him comes from the inmost brightness of His physiognomy, by which he is seen from without wholly as He is.'—LACORDAIRE, *Conferences*.

instance, Channing, who writes very beautifully on the subject, says, 'Jesus stood apart from other men. He borrowed from none and leaned on none. Surrounded by men of low thoughts, He rose to a conception of a higher form of human virtue than had yet been realized or imagined, and deliberately set Himself to its promotion as the supreme object of His life and death ;' with more to the same effect. But who would suppose from these and similar descriptions of the character of Jesus, striking and eloquent as they may be, and from pens of writers widely differing from Channing, that Jesus had Himself given this account of His self-sacrifice : 'This commandment have I received of my Father'? In some of these admirable pictures who can find an illustration of the way in which the Model Man kept what He Himself called the first and great commandment of the law? But His own challenge, 'Which of you convinceth me of sin?' is plainly, from the context, a challenge to show that He had been untrue *to His Father*. 'I honour my Father.' 'I seek not mine own glory.' 'He that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true.' 'I do always such things as please him.' '*That the world may know that I love the Father.*' 'My meat is to do the will of him that sent me.' 'Whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother.' Such are a

few of the words spoken from the abundance of the heart of the One Man who loved God with all His heart. How can we form any true conception of Him if we do not give prominence to this supreme regard to God? We read that He continually withdrew to pray, and on one occasion continued all night in prayer to God. We read of His adoring acquiescence in God's appointments: 'Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight.' We read that it cost Him a sweat of blood to utter those words of deepest filial submission: 'O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me except I drink it, thy will be done.'

These observations seem necessary to clear the way for our dealing with that evidence of His mission which resides in Christ Himself. We have not yet touched on anything inconsistent with His *mere humanity*; on the supposition, that is, that mere humanity could ever attain such perfection; we have been regarding Him as a holy *man*, calling God His Father, not *necessarily* in any other sense than that in which He teaches us to call Him 'Our Father.' But it is undeniable that when we once get beyond the character of Christ in His relations to man, and study it in His relations to God, we reach a point where we become conscious of a region beyond, into which we are summoned to enter. There we hear more distinctly the chal-

lence of Christ to our intuitions, to 'see' Him as 'the Son,' to believe in Him as we believe in God, to believe that He is in the Father, and the Father in Him, that in seeing Him we see the Father, that in knowing Him we know the Father; in a word, that He is God,—that He and His Father are One. Ἐγὼ καὶ ὁ πατὴρ ἓν ἐσμεν.*

I think no one can read the extracts in the last chapter without the conviction that Christ claims to be recognised as Himself His own evidence, as light is its own witness; and that He puts this evidence higher than all other evidence, and as the point to which all other evidence tends, so that the faith that does not reach it falls short of its end. But in connexion with this arises another consideration of most vital importance. The disciples of Jesus had been long with Him, and at the end of His course He had still to say, 'How sayest thou, Show us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me?' But then He added the promise of the 'Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost,' declaring to His sorrowing disciples that it was expedient for them that He should go away, in order that the Comforter might come to them; clearly intimating that they would know more of Him, when absent, from the teaching of the Holy

* John, x. 30; vi. 40; xiv. 1, 7, 10, 11.

Ghost, then they had ever known of Him when present. 'At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father.'

This opens to us a very important subject, and carries us irresistibly into further ground. In short, it is impossible to draw out fully the evidence for Christ's Divinity, according to His own teaching* without postulating the *existence and operations of the HOLY SPIRIT*. He appeals to men's insight, but adds that that insight is to be obtained from the Holy Spirit. If we assume Christ's authority, we must assume the importance of this truth.† He says to Peter that flesh and blood had not revealed to him the truth he confessed (§ 14). He reminds the Capernaïtes of the promise, and insists on the necessity, of being taught of God ;‡ and in His last discourse returns again and again to this point. If an objector complains that this complicates the question, I

* See Professor Leathes' *Boyle Lectures*, 1870. Lecture IV. I most earnestly commend this admirable lecture to the reader's attention.

+ Mr. Pattison dismisses 'The Spirit' in two or three brief and unworthy sentences.—*Essays and Reviews*, p. 328.

‡ 'Evidences of Christianity! I am weary of the word. Make a man feel the want of it. Rouse him, if you can, to the self-knowledge of his need of it ; and you may safely trust it to its own evidence,—remembering only the express declaration of Christ Himself, "*No man cometh to me, except the Father leadeth him.*"' How often are these words of Coleridge quoted, WITHOUT THE LAST CLAUSE !

may answer that it rather simplifies it. These are undoubted words of Christ, according to St. Luke's Gospel : ' If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, *how much more shall your heavenly Father give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him?*' Here is a promise that may at once be put to the test. ' There is something in this saying which stamps on it an air of conscious honesty and veracity. An artful person would hardly have committed himself so grossly. It is a calm, sober, deliberate assurance, founded on the benevolence and wisdom of the Divine Being. Put to the test this bold assertion. Ask your Heavenly Father to give you His Holy Spirit. If your prayer be granted, the Bible with all its rich proffers of present peace and eternal happiness will become your portion and reward for ever. If, on the contrary, your *ardent persevering* prayers should bring down no supplies of light and knowledge from above, then you may not only with great justice pronounce the Bible to be an impudent imposture, but you will be justified in doubting whether there be a God at all.' Thus writes one who had herself followed the course she recommends to others, and who thus relates her own experience : ' I waited not in vain. God at length revealed Himself to my understanding in a way that abundantly surpassed my expect-

ations,—I say to my *understanding*; for this was no rapturous trance of enthusiasm, but the sober and rational conviction of every faculty of my mind. My eyes were opened to discern the glory and excellence of the Scriptures, and their amazing superiority to every human composition. I perceived that they carried, within their own pages, a witness to their Divine Origin. “If any man wishes* to do the will of God, *he shall know* of the doctrine whether it be true, or whether Jesus Christ spake of himself.” Of this I am assured, both because it is God’s promise, and because He has fulfilled that promise to me. He has brought me out of the “horrible abyss” of doubt and unbelief, “and set my foot upon a rock.”†

In any case, according to Christ’s own statements, it is the witness of the Holy Spirit that gives real heartfelt effect to any evidence, and without this all evidence must fall short of its proper end.‡

And, once more, another item of evidence arises

* It should rather be ‘is willing’ (θέλει).

† *The Test of Truth*. By Mary Jane Graham. Seeley, 1835.

‡ Baxter says, in reviewing his life, ‘I am much more apprehensive than heretofore of the necessity of well grounding men in their religion, and especially of the witness of the indwelling Spirit : for I more sensibly perceive that the Spirit is the great witness of Christ and Christianity in the world.’ See the whole passage in Wordsworth’s *Ecclesiastical Biography*, vol. v. p. 568.

so immediately out of this witness, and is so evidently involved in Christ's own words, that it ought not to be overlooked. It is plain that this witness of the Holy Spirit, or the claim of it by credible persons—credible on account of the accordance of their lives therewith—becomes in turn one of the objective phenomena of Christianity. In the words of Professor Leathes: 'Thus "he that believeth on the Son of God," not only "hath the witness in himself," but also is himself a witness to the reality of that Divine Life from whence he draws his life. The consciousness of Christians, regarded as a phenomenon external to ourselves, is not only the fullest evidence that Christians themselves can have of the reality of their Divine Master's life, but it also constitutes an abiding witness to the non-Christian world, whether it is allowed and accepted or not, that the Jesus whom it confesses and adores,—and from whom alone it claims to be derived, is not after all a dead and powerless thought of the forgotten past,—a lifeless shadow flitting about among the disembodied shades of the departed great, who survive only in the fragrance of the ideas they have left behind them, but a living, powerful, and energetic verity, a personal force and influence, an animated Person, who is, from age to age, asserting and reasserting His own existence by the creation of individual

believers whom He raises up, and the continuation of the vast body of the faithful whom He preserves unfailingly to bear the life, and light, and power of His name before the unbelieving but rebuked conscience of mankind.'*

* *Boyle Lectures*, 1870, Lecture iv. The noble sermon of the Bishop of Peterborough on *The Demonstration of the Spirit* should be in every one's hands.

CHAPTER IV.

SUPERSTRUCTURE.

IT is hardly possible, after the close connexion we have found in the above passages between the *mission* of Christ and His *Deity*, to leave the subject without glancing at the relations of the foundation to the superstructure, or uttering the alarming words—dogmatic truth.

The way in which the argument used generally to be conducted, led up to the Divine Authority and inspiration of the Holy Scriptures; and the mind of the inquirer, if convinced, was prepared to search them for the truths they contained, as of indisputable authority. Hence the reception of the great verities of the Trinity in Unity, of the forgiveness of sins through faith in the atonement of the Redeemer,* and of the sanctification of our cor-

* It is satisfactory to see that there is now scarcely a question on any side whether this doctrine be contained in the canonical Scriptures; the question having now become one concerning the Inspiration of those Scriptures; but that this inspiration should be

rupt nature by the Spirit of God, followed almost as a matter of course. I am not assuming that this way is the best ; I only wish to urge that if the character of Christ is put forward, almost exclusively, as the grand evidence of Christianity, it must be with the due recognition of the need of that spiritual influence by which, *according to His*

denied *because* the admission of it carries with it that of the vicarious atonement, is out of all reason. I cannot resist giving an extract from Butler, which meets the old objection, now revived, so plausibly urged against this doctrine. Would that every objector would read and weigh the whole chapter ! ‘ There is one objection made against the satisfaction of Christ . . . that the doctrine of His being appointed to suffer for the sins of the world, represents God as being indifferent whether he punished the innocent or the guilty. . . . If there were any force at all in the objection, it would be stronger in one respect, against natural Providence, than against Christianity : because under the former, we are in many cases commanded, and even necessitated whether we will or no, to suffer for the faults of others ; whereas the sufferings of Christ were voluntary. . . . We see in what variety of ways one person’s sufferings contribute to the relief of another : and how, or by what particular means, this comes to pass or follows, from the constitution and laws of nature, which come under our notice ; and, being familiarized to it, men are not shocked with it. So that the reason of their insisting upon objections of the foregoing kind against the satisfaction of Christ, is, either that they do not consider God’s settled and uniform appointments as His appointments at all ; or else, they forget that vicarious punishment is a providential appointment of every day’s experience ; and then, from their being unacquainted with the more general laws of nature or divine government over the world, and not seeing how the sufferings of Christ could contribute to the redemption of it, unless by arbitrary and tyrannical will ; they conclude His sufferings could not contribute to it in any other way.’ Part II. chap. v.

own teaching, it is rightly discerned. In truth, we want a better expression than the 'character of Christ' for that evidence which He supplies *in Himself*, and perhaps a more suitable one will not be found than that which some have adopted,—His *Personality*. And if it be borne in mind that this evidence can only be apprehended by the secret illumination of the Holy Spirit, there is no fear of its dwarfing the superstructure by the narrowness of the basis it affords. But it is otherwise with the merely human 'character of Christ' drawn out in its aspect towards man alone. It will be either utterly powerless to produce conviction, as in the case of Rousseau, who composed a glowing eulogy on Him,—and would have crushed Him ; or, if it produces something like conviction, it will be with the vague and almost worthless result of making creedless Christians.

When a former generation woke up from the slumber into which it had been cast by the moral essays that had so long been delivered from the pulpit, a certain epigrammatic sentence was applied to these productions, that they were 'Christianity without Christ.' In truth, they could not be said to be Christianity at all. But we seem now to be arriving at a religious state which might not inaptly be designated, 'Christ without Christianity.' What the words 'Christ' or 'Christian' now import

it is often hard to say. They certainly cover, in some cases, 'the smallest possible residuum of faith.'* Accordingly, those who accept Christianity in this sense seem anxious to narrow its basis of evidence as much as possible, that they may leave room for the smallest possible superstructure of doctrine. This seems to be the mind with which a reviewer of the *Christian Evidence Lectures* endeavours to pare down the evidences to the lowest possible point, in order that the foundation may support the least possible amount of dogmatic truth. 'Those whom the lecturer wishes to convince will be repelled by the alternative that they must give up the moral excellence of Jesus, or accept Him as God . . . Christ may *have been* God, and yet *not in the sense* [in ?] which Canon Cook understands the divinity of Christ.'†

But is it worth while—or rather, is it consistent with Christ's own method—to produce evidences to prove anything less than the eternal Godhead of Christ? It is an injury to Christianity, and an injury to every honest inquirer into it. Christianity is not yet brought low enough to accept such small mercies at the hands of those whom she comes to bless, as would leave her one diluted

* Bishop of Ely's *Charge*, 1869.

† Rev. J. Hunt. *Contemporary Review*, September, 1871. The italics are mine.

piece of evidence out of her goodly array of proofs ; and that on condition of her holy doctrines being pared down in proportion.

And it would be an injury to any honest inquirer to hold back the great truth of the proper Deity of Him who came to save the lost, to which all our evidence points. We do not lay upon the doubter 'the burden of that stupendous mystery which staggers the human intellect,'* without showing him how he may be helped, according to Christ's own promise, *which is capable of being tested*, to entertain and receive it. Surely, it is kinder *thus* to set before him the whole truth, than to cut it down for him to dimensions which virtually nullify it. The sincere sceptic, in whose supposed interest such abatements are demanded, may, even by reading over the extracts in our second chapter, form a sufficiently clear judgment whether Christ did or did not imply and assert His own proper Deity.† It were evil indeed to meet honest inquiry with dishonest reticence. And if a man were brought to a qualified acknowledgment of Christ, *and there stopped*, he would have little reason, on the supposition of his having

* Hutton's *Theological Essays*, p. 244.

† Mr. Hutton says, and his thorough candour should give weight to his words, 'I held the existence of this claim to be indisputable long before I held that claim to be justified.' *Essays*. p. 262.

a soul to be saved through the knowledge of the truth, to thank one who had coaxed him into Christianity, and left him short of salvation.

Before leaving this subject, there is one point that may well be touched upon in connection with it. If there are words of Christ of special importance, surely they must be those which constitute the formula of the initiative rite of His religion. What then are His directions? 'Go ye and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.'

This formula must needs have a weighty meaning, and as it was to be used 'even to the end of the world,'* it cannot be considered 'worn out.' It stands at the very threshold of Christianity; and I suppose none will deny that *primâ facie* it seems to indicate some special and mysterious truth. Those who fail to see in it, what reappears in every part of the New Testament, the doctrine known in the Christian Church as the doctrine of the Trinity in Unity, are bound, if they can,

* It is obvious to remark on the evidential force of this command. Without forgetting that it is only those who shall see the end of the world who will be able to say whether the prophecy implied in it has been justified by the event, it is a fact as weighty as it is indubitable, that this command has been observed for more than eighteen centuries; in the course of which Christianity has lived through so many storms, that we need not fear the attacks that are made on her now. *Dabit Deus his quoque finem.*

to furnish some more coherent explanation of it. In the meantime, let me give the words of a good plain commentator,—‘To be baptized “into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,” implies professed dependence on these three Divine Persons, jointly and equally, and a devoting ourselves to them as worshippers and servants. This is proper and obvious, upon the supposition of the mysterious existence of three coequal Persons in the unity of the Godhead, but not to be accounted for upon any other principles. Christianity is the religion of a sinner who relies for salvation from wrath, and sin, and all evil, on the mercy of the Father, through the Person, righteousness, atonement, and mediation of the incarnate Son, and by the sanctification of the Holy Spirit.’*

* Scott's *Commentary*, Matt. xxviii. 19.

CHAPTER V.

H O N E S T D O U B T.

THE example of Christ, as shown by more than one of the preceding extracts, forbids me to end without a few words, spoken in love, to the sceptical reader,* if I should happen to have one.

I have met with the following sentence, which I have not been able to verify, attributed to Dr. Pusey : ‘ In the sceptical struggle after truth there may be often more of the Christian spirit than in unhesitating traditional belief.’ Tennyson’s dictum has almost itself become a creed :

‘ There lives more faith in honest doubt,
Believe me, than in half the creeds.’

Poets forfeit a little of their license when they undertake teaching of this kind ; and it may perhaps not be hypercritical to ask how objective faith can live in doubt, or how subjective faith can live in a creed.† But let that pass. I do not dispute

* It will be seen that I contemplate only a Theist.

† See note on chap. ii. § 16.

the sentiment.* For honest doubt I have true respect and heartfelt sympathy. But I much prefer the former of the above sentences. It serves, to my mind, to define what honest doubt is. I would call it 'a sceptical struggle after truth;' and I hope every honest doubter will accept the definition. Indeed, the more one feels of respect for, and interest in, honest doubt, the more one requires the persuasion that it really is what it professes to be. God forbid that any sincere struggler after truth should have the additional trial of feeling his sincerity called in question; but there ought to be no mistake as to who may be considered an honest doubter, so far as one man may judge of another.

It must, I think, be admitted as a general truth that honest doubt will be home-bred, or (to borrow a word of Mr. Hutton) indigenous, and not taken up at second-hand; or, if it has been imbibed from without, that at least it will have in it nothing factitious. It must be in its essence *involuntary*, and not assumed and cultivated, because it is fashionable.†

* Of course, I take the antithesis to be that which was expressed by one who said, 'One had better have Arnold's doubts, than most men's certainties.'—*Life of Arnold*, p. 17

† The 'epidemic *fastidium*,' as Coleridge calls it, is more difficult to deal with than a hundred arguments. Under its influence, I suppose, it is, that Butler 'is gone out of fashion' at Oxford.

These remarks are caused by the increasingly frequent recurrence of the phrase. Christians are often censured for the use of 'effete formulas;' certainly there are such things; I think 'honest doubt' in danger of very soon becoming one of them. But as, on the one hand, believers are to be found who employ the effete formulas in all their pristine force, so, on the other hand, though honest doubt may sometimes be a stolen phrase, I fully believe that there will be honest doubters to the end of time. And these have a right to most considerate treatment from the Christian believer. He cannot have learned Christ aright, who forgets how his Master dealt with such an objector as Nathanael, or such a doubter as Thomas. Nor can he have learned his own heart aright, who thinks the motive inapplicable: 'Considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.'

Again: surely honest doubt cannot regard itself as other than a *temporary* state. Can a sincere struggler after truth be brought face to face with Christianity, and not deem imperative the most serious inquiry into its claims? Can such an one rest without coming to some conclusion about it?

'Unto one's latest breath to fear
The premature result to draw,
Is this the object, end, and law,
And purpose of our being here?'

Honest doubt must needs ask this again and again. Who could calmly adopt as his fixed attitude that which the sculptor has given to St. Thomas, as 'he stands, the thoughtful meditative sceptic, with his rule in his hand for the due measuring of evidence and argument'?* Who, I ask, could serenely acquiesce in that as the ideal of his life-long state? Surely if such has been for awhile his attitude, he will one day be seen with his rule flung away, and his hands hanging down in blank disappointment, or else clasped in the adoring faith which exclaims, 'My Lord and my God.'

Inquiry, diligent, patient, and without prepossession,† such as science exacts from her votaries, is it too much for Christianity to ask? And before we settle to 'wait the great teacher, Death,' may it not be wise to see whether there really is no such thing as being 'taught of God'? Christ says our heavenly Father will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him; elsewhere He speaks of this Spirit as a Teacher. Is it begging the question to resort to prayer? Is it not also begging the question to

* Article 'Thomas' in Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible*.

† Dr. Chalmers (*Evidences*) considers that an Atheist is in a more favourable condition for the reception of Christianity than a Theist, because he will not, like the latter, reason *à priori* what God ought, or is likely, to do; and will therefore, if once convinced of the existence of God, have no difficulty in believing in the God of the Bible. I should be sorry, however, not to think that there are many Theists willing to go into the subject inductively.

decline adopting a means of arriving at truth so positively and so fearlessly asserted in the very forefront of the Christian religion? This is to assume at once that Christianity is false. I cannot see that you will be the worse logically, you may be infinitely the better practically, for complying with the earnest entreaty to study Christian evidences,* or the Bible itself, with habitual application to Him who has given us our faculties, and may be supposed to order our unruly wills. It is not to be concealed that belief in Christianity may involve something more than an intellectual surrender,—I am supposing the case of one honestly prepared to accept its obligations;—it is wise to call in what aid we may to counteract even an unconscious bias. I think one who has read the foregoing extracts from the Gospels with any seriousness, will hardly deny that here, if anywhere, is ‘*dignus vindice nodus*,’ that if God exercises any guiding influence on the spirits of men, it may be looked for here. Certainly no one can be said to have used every means of ascertaining the truth of Christ’s religion who has not tested the efficacy of prayer.† He

* I venture to recommend M’Ilvaine for the external, and Young’s *Christ of History* for the personal evidences. Also Birks’ *Bible and Modern Thought*.

† Let me beg the reader’s attention to the following passage from Coleridge’s *Aids to Reflection*. ‘If you have met with some one in whom on any other point you would place unqualified trust, who

who cannot find it in his heart to do this is indeed binding himself to a foregone conclusion; and it is one that must make the heart of a Christian ache.

For who would not grieve to part from a sceptic thus? If we think—ten thousand hearts will repudiate so *weak* a word—if we think, and much more if we believe and know, that we have found a Pearl, of great price, the one true ‘countercharm of space and hollow sky,’ that calls man out of his nothingness, enriches his existence with a fulness of meaning, gives an emphasis to life, and a brightness to death, what monster could equal him who should not long to impart this happiness to his fellow-men? *Then* let Christianity be swept into the dust-heap of the past, when hearts that hug to their core the glorious saying that ‘Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,’ shall cease to commend it to other hearts as true, and worthy to be received by all men.

has on his own experience made report to you that He is faithful who promised, and what He promised He has proved Himself able to perform: is it bigotry, if I fear that the unbelief which prejudges and prevents the experiment, has its source elsewhere than in the uncorrupted judgment: that not the strong free mind, but the enslaved will, is the true original infidel in this instance?’ P. 156.

Princeton Theological Seminary-Speer Library



1 1012 01012 4776